

Madam Chair, members of the committee, my name is Brenda Kjorstad.

I am the owner and operator of Kids Kount Daycare. Kids Kount is a family daycare located in Helena. I am licensed for six full time children and two after school children. I have been a childcare professional for the past seven years. I have chosen a job in the early childhood education field not only due to my love of children, but so that I may be there for my own children. I am a mother of three children, ages 14, 11 and 9. I believe that I provide quality childcare for the children in my care. They are loved as well as nourished intellectually and physically. I am not a stagnate provider; I am on level three of the Practitioner's Registry, due to my drive to obtain my Child Development Associate Credential. In addition I am Montana Infant and Toddler I and II certified. Currently I am attending the University of Montana Western to earn my Associate's of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education; I should be graduating this spring. I am also involved in the Protégé Mentoring Program, where I am serving as a mentor. The Apprenticeship Program is also another one of my involvements as well as being a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Now that you are aware of my education and background, I would like to inform you of my stance on the Market Rate Survey. Childcare is a profession like no other, very few providers or employees are blessed with benefit packages as well as income raises. I have worked at fast food places such as Mc Donald's where performance reviews are given approximately every three months to decide whether or not that employee should be given a five or ten cent raise in wage. Yes, this may seem like a small amount, but every little bit counts. That employee is being acknowledged for his or her good work. I'm sure that surveys have been conducted to show that higher wages result in more efficient work from employees. I'm not saying that I'm going to stop providing quality care if there is no longer a Market Rate Survey Increase, however, my own home life of struggling to provide for my own children may cause undue stress in my professional life. I have been in the Child Care field for many years, but I would hypothesis that average employers give their employees at least one raise a year. In our current country's recession, everything costs more, shouldn't child care providers be afforded the right to earn a living as well?

I just recently raised my child care rate January 5, from \$22.00 a day to \$23.00. The last time I raised my rates was in November of 2007. I strive to keep my rates at state rates, so that when I am serving a Best Beginnings Scholarship child I don't have to charge the parents the co-pay as well as the difference in rates. My understanding is that seventy five percent of providers currently charge at or under state rates. My business needs this Market Rate Increase to ensure my families livelihood, I am a

quality facility that wants to provide reasonable rates for parents. Everyone needs to make a living regardless of their professional field. We provide a wonderful service to society, we are raising Montana's children to be functioning members of society that can learn from our mistakes, take pride in being an American and take a stance on important issues. I apologize for my need to leave, however my business demands that I return to fulfill my obligations.

Thank You,

Brenda Kjorstad